

SURVEY: AMERICANS NOT WARMING UP TO NUCLEAR POWER AS SOLUTION TO ENERGY CRISIS AND CLIMATE CHANGE

*Bush Administration Making Little or No Headway in Selling Nuclear Power Option;
Doubts, Worries About Nuclear Power “Strikingly Bipartisan” ... Only Nonvoters Seem Game.*

WASHINGTON, D.C.//May 31, 2006///Despite a major sales push by the Bush Administration and the electrical utility industry, nuclear power is viewed in a deeply skeptical way by a “strong and strikingly bipartisan majority” of Americans, according to a major new Opinion Research Corporation (ORC) survey released today by the Civil Society Institute, a nonpartisan and nonprofit think tank that has conducted extensive public opinion research into the attitude of Americans about energy-related issues. According to the survey, Americans favor developing clean renewable energy alternatives and strategies – including increased conservation, solar energy and wind power -- that can be delivered more rapidly than nuclear power.

The new CSI survey found that more than three out of five Americans (61 percent) say the nation can’t “afford to wait ... to put in place part of the solution to the energy crisis and global warming” if “building more nuclear power plants will take a decade or more in the U.S. and cost tens of billions of dollars.” Only a third said the U.S. could wait for more nuclear power plants to come on-line as a way to dealing with today’s energy and climate woes.

A key survey finding: Politics does not seem to be a factor when it comes to supporting or opposing nuclear power and other energy alternatives. A nearly identical 60 percent of conservatives, 62 percent of independents and 68 percent of liberals agree with the 61 percent of Americans who think the nation can’t afford the wait and expense associated with erecting more nuclear power plants. (However, the Bush Administration and other pro-nuclear lobbyists may have friends in nonvoters, of whom 47 percent are unconcerned about the build-out timeline and cost issues associated with more nuclear power, compared to the 63 percent of voters who are.)

Another illustration of the strikingly bipartisan nature of the views of Americans on nuclear power: Only 9 percent of conservatives, 8 percent of independents and 5 percent of liberals say they have “no concerns about increased U.S. reliance on nuclear power.”

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solo said: **“Once again, Americans are ‘leading their leaders’ and weighing in solidly behind renewable and clean technologies. The reality is that concerns about safety and radioactive wastes will continue to plague the nuclear industry. The public favors the deployment of proven transitional technologies that can be applied appropriately, taking advantage of the natural resources of a region. For decades, our elected officials and corporate leaders have deferred solving our energy problems. Now facing another extending crisis, it is long past time to take advantage of technologies that are clean, renewable and that can help rescue the environment from human-induced climate change.”**

Opinion Research Corporation Vice President Wayne Russum said: **“These survey findings suggest that Americans in general – and politically active Americans more specifically – are unlikely to be persuaded by arguments that nuclear power is a credible solution to today’s**

energy crisis and climate change. Those who are out there selling nuclear power on the campaign trail and in the news media clearly have their work cut out for them. The bottom line is that Americans want to hear more about conservation, solar and wind power – which they view as credible steps that can be taken now to deal with the energy crisis and global warming.”

OTHER KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

The new Civil Society Institute poll also found the following:

- Most Americans would prefer to see the U.S. explore the use of any of more conservation, wind power and solar energy “before we resort to adding more nuclear power.” The survey shows that “more conservation to reduce wasted energy” was supported as a first step by 88 percent of Americans (including 61 percent who said “definitely”); solar power by 86 percent (including 57 percent who said “definitely yes”); and wind power by 81 percent (including 53 percent who said “definitely yes”).
- Three out of four Americans (75 percent) would be concerned if “nuclear power was focused on at the expense of renewable, clean and safe alternative energy solutions” such as “solar, wind and other less expensive and more rapidly delivered energy solutions”. Significantly, more than two out of five Americans (41 percent) said that they would be “definitely concerned” if nuclear power was allowed to eclipse other alternative energy solutions.
- Over three-fifths of Americans (62 percent) agree with the statement: “The energy and global warming problem is happening now. We need most of the emphasis placed on immediate and near-term solutions that will deliver fast results” such as “solar energy and wind power” and “increased conservation.” Less than a third of Americans think most of the emphasis should be on “solutions that will deliver results a decade from now or later” such as “nuclear power and hydrogen fuel cells”.
- Fewer than one out of 10 Americans (8 percent) have “no concerns about increased U.S. reliance on nuclear power.” This contrasts sharply with Americans who cited such concerns as “lack of secure storage facilities for wastes that remain radioactive for thousands of years” (66 percent); “human error, as in Chernobyl and Three Mile Island” (58 percent); “risk of terrorist attacks” 56 percent; “high cost to ratepayer of constructing new nuclear energy facilities” (47 percent); and “limited availability of low-cost uranium for increased nuclear power production” (41 percent). (Respondents were allowed to identify more than one concern.)
- More than four out of five Americans (81 percent) do not “want to have a nuclear power plant reactor constructed next to or otherwise close” to their home – including 62 percent who said “definitely no” and in sharp contrast to the total of 16 percent who said “yes.”
- Roughly three out of five Americans (58 percent) think that “the highest priority should be put on alternative energy solutions that ‘fit’ the region – both in terms of the scale of the solution and how it takes advantage of the opportunities presented by the region in question.” Examples

of such regional solutions include “the Pacific Northwest region (which) has long used its rivers to generate electrical power from hydropower dams” and “in the Eastern U.S., wind farms ... cropping up along the coast to take advantage of ocean breezes.” Only about a third (35 percent) think “the highest priority should be put on alternative energy solutions that solve our nation's energy problems in a uniform and centrally organized manner, the same across the United States. Different regional issues and/or geographical realities shouldn't influence the decision-making process.” (Nuclear power plant construction was cited as an example of the “big technology” approach.)

For full survey findings, go to the Civil Society Institute Web site at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>. The CSI Web site also features a March 2006 report, “Policy Abhors a Vacuum,” which outlines steps that “more than 40 states, and almost 200 municipalities are taking ... to address global warming concerns.”

ORC SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Survey results are based on telephone interviews conducted among a sample of 1,016 adults (505 men and 511 women) aged 18 and over living in private households in the continental United States. Interviewing was completed by Opinion Research Corporation during the period of May 18-21, 2006. Completed interviews of the survey adults were weighted by four variables: age, sex, geographic region, and race, to ensure reliable and accurate representation of the total adult population. The margin of error is plus or minus 3 percentage points for the complete sample of 1,016 adults. Smaller sub-groups will have larger error margins.

ABOUT CSI

The nonprofit and nonpartisan Civil Society Institute is a think tank that serves as a catalyst for change by creating problem-solving interactions among people, and between communities, government and business that can help to improve society. CSI has conducted more than half a dozen major surveys since 2003 on energy issues, including global warming, renewable energy and vehicle fuel-efficiency standards. CSI is the parent organization of 40mpg.org (<http://www.40mpg.org>). You can find the Civil Society Institute on the Web at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: A streaming audio recording of a related news event will be available on the Web as of 3 p.m. ET on May 31, 2006 at <http://www.civilsocietyinstitute.org>. The full survey findings and news release already are available on the same Web site.